



NO WAY OUT

The Dangers of Flood Control Channels

PROPERTY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
**TRESPASSING-LOITERING
FORBIDDEN BY LAW**
UP TO \$500 FINE OR SIX MONTHS
IMPRISONMENT OR BOTH
STATE LAW

A Safety Reminder

Warning! Warning! Warning! Warning! Warning! Warning! Warning!

- ◆ When it rains in Los Angeles County, flood control channels, rivers, and arroyos can quickly fill up with fast-moving water, creating a potentially life-threatening danger to anyone who gets caught or swept away.
- ◆ It is against the law to be down inside a flood control channel, regardless of whether it is wet or dry.

What Should You Do?

What if you fall in?

- ◆ Never get into this situation!
- ◆ Remain calm. Don't waste energy yelling for help after you have been spotted by someone.
- ◆ Get ready to be rescued.
- ◆ Try to float on your back with your legs straight and your feet pointed downstream.
- ◆ Use your legs to shove yourself away from obstructions.
- ◆ Keep your head up so that you can see where you are going.
- ◆ Watch for obstacles and debris! If a tree or other stationary object is blocking the channel, forcing water over it, try to flip over on your stomach and approach the obstacle head-on, crawling over the top of it. Most victims in swift water die when they get pinned against obstacles, or get trapped in submerged debris and vegetation.

What if you see someone fall into the water?

- ◆ **DO NOT GO INTO THE WATER AFTER THE VICTIM!**
- ◆ Do not try to pull the victim out with your hands, rope, or similar device. Do not attach anything to yourself and toss it to a victim in the water. The force of the current will pull you in.
- ◆ If possible, throw a flotation device to the victim, such as a boogie board, styrofoam ice chest, basketball, or other unattached objects.
- ◆ **Immediately call 911!**
Tell the 911 operator that someone who fell into the channel is being swept downstream and that swift water rescue teams need to respond.
- ◆ Give accurate information about where you saw the victim go in, what the victim was wearing, etc.



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Information about Flood Control Channels

In Los Angeles County, there are:

- ◆ 470 miles of open channels
- ◆ 2,400 miles of underground storm drains
- ◆ 70,000 street drains
- ◆ Open channels that range in size from two to 600 feet in width, and from two to 40 feet in depth.

Did you know that:

- ◆ It's against the law to be down inside a flood control channel, regardless of whether it is wet or dry.
- ◆ Local swift water rescue teams respond to about 100 river rescue calls per year. On average, there are 6 to 10 fatalities annually in Los Angeles County.
- ◆ Children 5 to 15 comprise the highest percentage of victims rescued by swift water rescue teams.

What to keep in mind:

- ◆ If you see someone fall into a flood-swollen flood channel, river, or arroyo, **DO NOT** jump in or try to save the victim! Immediately call 911. Swift water rescue teams will quickly respond.
- ◆ Swimming skills have nothing to do with surviving a flood control channel. The current is so strong that even highly skilled swimmers can get swept to their deaths.
- ◆ Water velocities in channels can range from 9 to 45 mph. Water moving at 3 mph creates about 35 pounds of pressure against the body. At 12 mph, the water exerts a force of 540 pounds of pressure. Flood waters in the channels commonly flow at about 30 mph. The power of such water pressure was exemplified in 1996 when a 46,000-pound, fully loaded cement truck was washed down the Los Angeles River in less than two feet of water.
- ◆ In just over 50 miles, the Los Angeles River drops 800 feet to the ocean--about 16 feet per mile. By contrast, the Mississippi River drops 800 feet over a distance of 2,300 miles--about 4 inches per mile. The steep descent of the Los Angeles River increases the velocity of the water.